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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6668
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0589
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1541
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4630
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4120
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7679
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5238
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1218
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1120
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0081
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3338
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1021
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001012

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; EB/CIP/BA
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2016
TAGS: [ECON](#) [ECPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: BURMESE GOVERNMENT PLAYING GAMES WITH INTERNET

REF: A. RANGOON 1009
[1](#)B. RANGOON 970
[1](#)C. RANGOON 718

RANGOON 00001012 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Economic Officer Samantha A. Carl-Yoder for Reasons 1.4
(b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Burmese Government on October 9 granted Myanmar Teleport and the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPT), the two local internet providers, permission to reestablish internet connections at specific times during the day. We have observed that the internet is now available from 10:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m., and intermittently from 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m. Most internet cafes in Rangoon remain closed because cafe owners cannot earn enough in four hours to cover their operational costs. Contacts at MPT and Myanmar Teleport do not know when internet will be fully operational, but are confident that internet hours will be extended from 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. by the end of the month. The GOB plans to more aggressively enforce the standing regulation that all internet users register before going online. End Summary.

Sometimes It's Up...

[1](#)2. (C) Myanmar Teleport and the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPT), Burma's two internet service providers (ISPs), continue to tell customers that internet service is down due to "problems with underwater cables." However, Embassy employees with internet at home confirmed that internet has been available during curfew hours, between 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m., since October 5. A contact at Myanmar Teleport informed us that the GOB agreed to allow internet access at night because fewer than 10,000 subscribers in Rangoon have internet at home (Ref C). He

added that both Myanmar Teleport and MPT on October 9 started providing internet access during the day, from 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m. Neither MPT nor Myanmar Teleport officials could tell us when the internet would be fully operational, but they expressed confidence that the ISPs would begin to provide service from 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. by the end of the month.

¶3. (C) Traders Hotel confirmed that they have been able to access the internet to charge customers using credit cards since October 9 (Ref A); our business contacts informed us that internet connections were sporadic and extremely slow. Over the past two days, the internet often went down for several 45-minute periods during the four-hour window, and people were unable to download large attachments. While many of our contacts reported that emails sent several weeks ago were just now trickling in, they were still unable to send any large emails to addresses outside of Burma.

Internet Cafes Remain Closed

¶4. (C) Despite internet connectivity, the majority of cyber cafes in Rangoon remain closed. Several internet cafe owners told us that the internet connection was too slow to attract customers, and that they would spend more in operational costs than they would earn in four hours a day. Cafe owners, aware that the GOB may soon allow the ISPs to operate the internet for six hours during the day, noted that they will wait to open their shops. One cafe owner told us that several businessmen approached him asking to use his internet cafe during curfew hours. They promised that they would not leave the premises at night or otherwise draw attention to themselves. The owner, afraid of what would happen if they were caught, told them to come back when they had local

RANGOON 00001012 002.2 OF 002

authority permission to violate the curfew; the businessmen did not return.

¶5. (C) Several cafe owners also told us of GOB plans to monitor internet use more closely. Under Burmese law, people must register at internet cafes before they are allowed to use a computer, although many internet cafes do not usually enforce this regulation. MPT and Myanmar Teleport officials told several cyber cafe owners that they must now hand over these registration forms to any local official who requests them.

Comment

¶6. (C) Although the GOB allowed local providers to reestablish internet connectivity, the Burmese still face great difficulties in accessing the internet. Most Burmese do not have internet access at home, and with the majority of internet cafes still closed, people's options for online communications remain very limited. The internet is not yet fully operational, and connectivity is slow and sporadic at best. The GOB's desire to control how much information, and what type of information, can be sent out of the country remains a higher priority to them than allowing people to conduct normal 21st century business.

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